

Louise is a five-year-old child. Louise's kindergarten teacher called DCS with a concern that Louise could have been sexually abused. The DCS case manager interviewed the child at school and Louise denied all abuse. However, the case manager was alarmed because in the interview Louise behaved unusually fearful and seemed unduly alarmed. After the interview at school, the worker contacted Louise's mother, and they arranged to get counseling for Louise. When Louise got into counseling, she disclosed that, unknown to her mother, the mother's paramour was sexually abusing Louise.

After the Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation

When the immediate safety or well being of a child is endangered, the Department has the authority to seek a court order to remove the child from the custody of his/her parents or caretaker.

CPS Services to Intact Families

Parents or caretakers are sometimes abusive or neglectful due to lack of parenting skills or lack of knowledge about child development. Department of Children's Services case managers use a risk assessment instrument to assess risk to the child. If the case manager determines that services may benefit the family, a case manager works with the family to address the identified risk issues in the home.

Children's Justice Task Force

A multi-disciplinary Children's Justice Task Force, appointed by the Commissioner, annually reviews and evaluates Tennessee's investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases. The Task Force has made recommendations for system reform that will provide guidance for continued improvement in protecting Tennessee's children from abuse and neglect.

Foster Care

Children who live in families that are unable or unwilling to care for them need the strength of a stable and secure environment. The Department of Children's Services is responsible for providing temporary care or foster care for many of these children. In fiscal year 1998-1999, 10,598 children were in foster care in Tennessee. (See Appendix 1 for additional Foster Care statistics). DCS recruits foster families who provide safe and supportive homes in which the children's emotional, physical, and social needs can be met.

For some children and youth who come into foster care with significant emotional or behavioral problems, specialized treatment programs are used, such as therapeutic foster